

To the Supreme Authority, 24 June 1659

Parliament of the Commonwealth of England, &c.

The humble Petition of divers well-affected inhabitants of the County of Wilts.

Calling to minde the Grounds and Ends of the late War and Bloudshed in these Nations, how signally you were owned by God in your former management of the Government of this Commonwealth, and how miraculously, even beyond the expectation of most men, after a long Interruption, (which the Lord in his infinite wisdom suffered, to try and humble both you and us) you are again peaceably restored to the performance and exercise of your Trust, (as you are the Peoples Representatives;) And withal considering, to our great rejoicing and satisfaction, your late Declaration, That you will endeavour (by the Lords assistance) to settle the Government of this Commonwealth upon such a Foundation as may assure and secure our Liberties both as Men and Christians, and that without a single person or House of Peers; we cannot but bless the God of all our mercies for putting this opportunity into your hands, and inclining your hearts (notwithstanding all the discouragements which lie before you) to a further prosecution of your duty, in reference to the safety and freedom of this Commonwealth; and do judge it a duty incumbent upon us, cordially to close with this miraculous Providence of God, whereby his precious Cause is again vindicated, and the hearts of the good People of this Land in a great measure revived and comforted; and to contribute our utmost endeavours for strengthening your hands, in the further carrying on the great Work of Reformation in this Commonwealth: it being our earnest desire, that your last works may be your best, and that you may have such a special and more then ordinary presence of God with you in your Debates and Resolves, that both we, and the generations to come, may have abundant cause to bless his Name for you, as the most famous and memorable Parliament that ever engaged for the Liberties of England, &c.

And that we may the better express our cordial Affections to this Commonwealth, and to your Honours, as you are intrusted therewith, we shall take the boldness as others have done (with whom we are engaged in the same Cause) humbly to lay before you the sincere Desires of our hearts, and to particularize a few of those things, which may by the blessing of God conduce to the establishment of Common Right and Freedom, and may answer the expectations of our dear Country-men, who have hazarded their lives and estates in that precious Cause which you and your victorious Army have so often and so eminently asserted in your Remonstrances and Declarations.

1. That the Magistracie and Militia of this Commonwealth may be speedily settled in the hands of confiding persons, such as fear the Lord, and have given testimony of their love to all his people, and of their faithfulness to the Cause of this Commonwealth; according to your Declaration of the 7th of May, 1759.

2. That care may be taken (according to the minde of God) for propagating the Gospel of Jesus Christ in this Commonwealth, and the due encouragement of all the faithful, godly and peaceable Ministers and Professors thereof: And that all Penal Laws and Statutes which do intrench upon the Liberties of conscientious Christians of different persuasions in matters of Religion, may be repealed and made void.

3. That no persons whatsoever may continue too long in Power, either Civil or Martial; but that they may be in a capacity to be governed and ruled, as well as to govern and rule: And that no person, by virtue of any Tenure, Grant, Charter, Patent, Degree, Birth, or Military employment, may be privileged or exempted from subjection to the Laws: And that the Liberty and Freedom of the people may be so rendered and secured, both in their persons and goods, that they may not be proceeded against but upon the transgression of some known Law; and that all Trials for life may be made by Twelve sworn men of the Neighbourhood: and no conviction had or made, but upon the testimony of two or more sufficient Witnesses.

4. That all Punishments inflicted upon Delinquents in this Commonwealth, may be equally proportioned to their several Offences, (according to the Laws of God and Nature) that so the precious lives of our dear Country-men may not be forfeited upon trivial and slight occasions.

5. That the Legislative power of this Commonwealth may be so ascertained in the Representatives of the People, (duely chosen by them) that neither a Single Person, Senate for life, nor House of Lords, may have any share therein, nor be co-ordinate therewith.

6. That you will abbreviate and regulate the proceedings at Law, and in your grave Wisdoms devise a way that the people may have justice duly administered, and their Suits speedily determined, near their dwellings: And that the Laws may be so modeled and framed, that they may not in the least countenance or support Monarchy, but be every way suitable and subservient to the Government of a Free State.

7. That you will endeavour speedily and effectually to revive and restore the Trade of this Nation, and encourage the Manufacture of Clothing, wherein many thousands are concerned, and which hath no small influence upon this Commonwealth: And that you will use some means to keep the people from Beggery and Idleness, in such a good and fruitful Land as this is.

8. That satisfaction may be given to those well-affected persons who lent money on the Publike Faith, and are now in great Want and Penury.

9. That you will take into consideration all such Corporations and Charters as do any way Monopolize or abridge the Birthrights and Liberties of English men, and which are no other then Badges of Kingship and Royal Prerogative, and therefore unsuitable to the Government of a well-regulated Free State, which we humbly desire may be speedily settled by your Honours, for the benefit of the present and succeeding Generations.

10. That you will appoint a Committee to receive such Rational Proposals as shall be made by sober discreet persons, in order to such a Settlement, as hath been practised in the first forming and introducing of other Commonwealths or Free States.

11. That a strict Survey may be taken, and a Pious and Publike Improvement made of the several Hospitals of this Commonwealth; that so the Profits and Revenues thereof may not be converted to private uses, contrary to the intention of the Donors.

And your Petitioners shall ever pray, &c.

The 22 of June, 1659.

This Petition being this day presented to the House by divers Gentlemen of the County of Wilts, it was read, and the Gentlemen called into the House. The Speaker gave them this answer: Gentlemen, the House hath read your Petition, and finde a great deal of sobriety and wisdom in it, and many expressions of good affections; and they have commanded me to give you the Thanks of this House for your Petition, and your good affections and expressions: and I do give you the Thanks of this House for your good affections and expressions accordingly.

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